



**THE SOVEREIGN IN THE STREET
AND OTHER POEMS**

LIONEL JOSEPHARE

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The Sovereign in the Street

And Other Poems

By

LIONEL JOSAPHARE



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A. M. ROBERTSON
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Containing

The Sovereign in the Street

The Humpback, the Cripple
and the One-Eyed Man

The Past

A Death

187876



The Sovereign in the Street

From a castle of thoughts that my conscience was
building

I studied a man who was cutting a street,
While the round-rolling sun was demeaning and
gilding

Him thinking and ripping the ditch at his feet.

Of this native of grief, as he shoveled the furrow,
I write, be the subject a poem or not;

For as deep did he burrow, my love traveled
thorough

And writes, be the truth of it rubies or rot.

Oh, 'tis weird that the truth, like a corpse on the
floor,

Should bleed on our carpets and stare at the
light;

And that Art should ignore what she taught us be-
fore,

And tear up the lessons we prattled last night.

Not with your eyes, my poet, rose-haunted and
grave—

Thou poet with wondering beauty-mad eyes—
Did I look on the slave digging low in the cave,
Corroded with dust, sweat, itch, sunbeams and
flies.

O dim-blushing poet with Grecian-strung lyre,
Declare not my earth-man in melody wrong,
Nor that Beauty's attire and effulgence inspire:
'Tis the voice of the singer makes noble the
song.

Like a grave-digger digging a terrible grave—
Like a sun spirit heaving the hot day with coal,
His dredger he drave and he hove to the pave
The clods that he tore from the earth and flung
whole.

The freight of his spade, coming dun from the bung
Of the foul-smelling sand, seemed the filth of his
fate.
And fast while he flung the material dung
Of the earth he built sidelong the mound of his
hate.

The wealth-wasting givers of feasts grew in riches;
Wide, wide grew the hands at the hilt of the
task;
And there came a dream which is a curse on all
ditches
And pain guised the laborer's face like a mask.

The point of the shovel grew inward and blunt
And the love in the eye of the trencher grew
dim;
As he dug with a grunt, became shorter in front,
And his fingers grew crooked, knock-knuckled
and grim.

Still at underground honor his scepter he points,
With negligence digging a tragical story;
While some dunce who anoints with wealth his vile
joints,
Stands proud on the swift-rolling chariots of
glory.

O for a lithe shovel of truculent aim
To gouge at the greed that keeps need in the
sands!
For the spade of good fame is of wood and steel
frame,
But to masters of men it is wood, steel and
hands.

Then dig, ye bones, dig; ye have many more years;
Your sorrows will shine to the eyelids of God;
And Destiny hears your soft-falling tears:
O'er the task of the spade let your man's noddle
nod.

What matters it, marrow and gristle and brain
Or tendon and belly and tooth are intent?
Or that eyeball and vein in a perishing strain
To the rim of the earth-riving shovel are bent?

Empowered of shoulder and elbow and groin,
In struggle malefic he wearies at length,
While innard and loin to the hot shovel join,
Converting his pride to the need of new strength.

What long-contained smiles have been stopped at
those lips?
What thoughts dead and useless are oozing in
sweat?
What majesty drips on those foul-flanneled hips?
How laboring low makes nobility wet!

What tears that his eyelids a passage denied
Took a brinier course through the fast-weeping
pores?
What thoughts were untied—what escapings of
pride
When first he dug sands for their silverless ores?

I could shout to the sun (whose hot splendors are
falling

And burning this handler of shovels) behold!
What devils are calling and gambling and brawling
For them who with fingers of gold count their
gold.

But it boots not relating what devils, alack,
With smutty red limbs and blue bellies are
waiting

To harrow a pack of scared souls on the rack;
That's a matter of prayers and religious debat-
ing.

But the pendulum swaying through seasons to bring
The scenic effusion of May, we remember—
From flowery Spring will as quietly swing
Back, back in its path to the wilds of November.

So the beam in Time's balance will pass in its frame
And the places of wealth become blighted and
cold;

For its gold and its fame from weary blood came,
And Time will refund it with blood from the
gold.

The Humpback, the Cripple and the One-Eyed Man.

One eve, while at my window-panes I stood,
Gray films of memory patched the dull gray view,
Where thoughts, blithe-winged, meandered as they
 would,
Like odd-eyed fairies that from childhood flew.
When mind's deep glass on childhood's ground
 reflects,
Where is the childish tenant of that place?
Dead in his older self, now recollects
The inscrutable sorrows on that infant's face.
Yond sets the sun, that has not lost a day
In tacking through the sky his blazing hull.
But where's the light that sunned that child at play?
E'en memory's picture-light of it is dull.

Thus oft, while legendary youth adjusting
To present movings in the glare of wealth,
I gaze past little house-tops poor and rusting,
Where honor crawls and freedom breathes by stealth.
To those brown wooden homes my thoughts 'gan fall,
My love and pity passed; and fancy strayed
Through dark defiles of streets, which ended small,
And there the ragged-running rabble played.
Out of that struggling multifarious throng,
A movement, as of setting forth, began;
From which emerged a captain huge and strong,
What time I saw he was a humpbacked man.

I next beheld him in my room. His tread
Was like an army's, though he came alone.
With woes to stoppage fraught, he gazed ahead
And, victim of a thousand crimes, did groan.
Lofty, though lashed and lulled from eloquent line,
Despoilt with tasks and years, on him, withal,
Innumerable beauties did still twine,
Like roses livening a ruined wall.
Rigid with strength, solidified with grief,
He felt no amber sun-beams make him bright,
But saw, with the magic eyesight of belief,
The hand of wrong betwixt him and the light.

His frown was apt with anger to chastise,
Like God's, to awe the ungodly to obey;
And yet the kindlier prospect of his eyes
Was like a twilight turning bluebells gray.
His smile was like a hope of sweeter woe,—
A vision rising from a lake of tears;
For tears from hopes and pent-up visions flow,
And his had flowed in spirit through the years.
Of sentences to tie into a tale,
He lacked supply, nor gained them from the gloom,
And, when of his few words he made avail,
His voice was like the coward's in a tomb.

He showed me wrongs and schedules of complaint,
In wide expectance of my soon surprise;
And at such misery as he could paint,
Asked me to imitate his bardlike sighs.
But I, in walls with seemlier pictures brimming,
Did scrutin his with courtesy at most.
Ill-framed with splendors, frightless was his
limning—

The noontime telling of a midnight ghost.
Then he, with toppling-heavy shoulders bowed,
Withdrew unsoothed and through his people went,
Obscurely as the shadow of a cloud
Through a dark forest. Then my view was bent.

Then came a rogue who entered with a thud—
A crippled, crack-legged, crimson-browed alarm,
A night-hag's dwarf, inbred with Satan's blood
And marked by Hell's astrology for harm.
Softly! He is all memory now. But I
Remember what a tragic rage he had
And physiognomic shadows that did ply
His hate and seem, each one, a face to add.
Hobbler upon mismated legs he came,
Stopping in fault, or with short-coming hurry,
Limped hither thither like a shifting flame
And cursed and perjured with exceeding worry.

From a short reverie and scowl aside,
This flame-and-smoke hued villain then rebounded;
"Remorse on you! Fall down and weep," he cried,
And, being raged, a throaty tale expounded.
"Boilers will burst in wrath and vent their ills;
New patriots your walls from walls will pluck,
Unlock the axles of the frothing mills
And hurl the hot vibrating wheels amuck.
I see your windows burst spouting flame
And you in cinders blacker than ours now—"
Madman! I stopped him there and, with exclaim,
Seated my fist compactly on his brow.

Binding his forehead with his arms he quailed
Out of my eyes, nor back his dudgeon darting,
Avaunted and himself with tears regaled
And sobs to keep him company departing.
And then I saw that I was not alone:
The third who now against me did contrive
Was clad in mouldy black, not aye his own,
And, having but one eye, looked half alive.
The eye survivor seemed in fright to stare
Still at the violence that had quashed the other;
Or else accounted all the world unfair
For leering on the cave left by its brother.

Shiftless, ere long he into words did stray;
Inhaled the simple twilight for his lung,
Which worked (in their behalf who were away)
The leaky loud poetics of his tongue.
His plural and most voluble debating
Paused often and amazed to pick its choice
Of words and repetitions lost and waiting
In the astounding mazes of his voice.
He said that we are foemen to defeat them
Whose lives we press and purchase hour to hour;
And swore that we are cannibals and eat them
Whose strength is in the dainties we devour.



“Tripe-fed philosopher and gloomy dunce!”
To him I quick in rising soul replied,
“You are the devils cast from Heaven once,
Now from the light of heavenly wealth denied.
A fool tongue curling, ‘justice’ is your word:
Not you, not I, but God knows what that is,
And how much debt the crime of life incurred,
And how each yearning knave may reason his.
To vanquish Heaven is a feat for Hell,
That Pleasure, smiling, frighten at Hell’s frown;
Your duty is to envy and rebel;
Mine is to battle your rebellion down.

“Therefore, should I be gracious to your will,
Letting your fortunes bask where mine have
 flourished,
And with my art your artless hopes fulfill,
Your wants would grow in purpose, being nourished;
Yet would, as grew their project, lose in power,
For, being wronged, the courage gains in force;
But favors, man, would steal your anger’s flower,
Leaving you poor in motive and resource.
Then should I grant the simple things you ask,
I would be shrewdly stealing all you own:
The conquest of its own is honor’s task;
Without which task, how would its work be known?”

Then he, naught saying nor attempting, turned,
Slinking off like a lean cat in the rain.
But scarce outside his transit I discerned,
Another came to give my fancies pain.
O mortal horror! Not until Hell's doom,
When the last shivering consumptive imp
Will slam the black and icy gates of gloom
And fall convulsed with many a woeful crimp,
Will there again such mangled monster crawl
Out of the glimmering pits (as if surviving
Satan and all his tortures) as did fall
Into my sight—a shape that howled arriving.

Of the deformities of them before
He was the ghastly, physical conjunction;
Shaped by his wounds and showing many more
To try my fear or delicate compunction,
Threefoldly damaged, wrenched from noble height,
With blood-stains in his beard and hair that ran
Into mad masses, he was all, outright,
Humpbacked and crippled and a one-eyed man,
Like the first huge up-shouldered one he loomed,
And like the angry cripple dragged a limb,
And like the one-eyed man's his one eye bloomed,
And as a gory giant he was grim.

He spoke: "I am that one you firstly scanned.
I am the man of many woes and wrongs.
I know the backs that suffer and withstand.
I know the hearts to which your blood belongs.
No longer I am anvil to your pride:
I walk, though lamed by Jealousy and Fear;
For when my comrades took me for their guide,
The jealous rivals of my wrath stabbed here.
Then I the wisdom of our wants became,
And he who was half-sighted was put by,
Shrieking as he struck here with hideous aim,
'Let our great leader be one-eyed, as I.'

"Thus I am fit memorial of the strife;
My body is become a bloody flag.
Adorned with the atrocities of life,
I am the fury of the hut and rag.
Humpbacked I am from shouldering golden wrongs;
Lame—all my deeds by jealousy are crippled;
One-eyed in the half-wisdom of my throngs,
But in resolve all their terrifies tripled.
I threaten you, Revenge has yet in keep
Memory of inextinguishable stuff,
And Retribution can through armies leap
Till overcrowded Hell must cry 'Enough!'

“Your crimes, though weak, have bent me into
strength,
That I may clasp your struggles in my hand.
Though bowed, I crush; though lame, limp to great
length;
One-eyed,—my deeds I need not understand.
Tremble and move as timber struck by steel.
Howl with repentance through your vacant fame.
Depart on limbs that soon may learn to kneel;
And, fallen in escaping, bleed with shame!”
He said no more; but his dark arm rose high.
And he is here. His shoulders heave with woe.
And he is thinking and he has one eye;
Monster, with wrongs and wrath, he will not go.

The Past

Tell me not, O buff-skulled master, that the heart of
youth is faster

In the orbit of its dreaming when fantastic and un-
wise;

That our youngest-bred affection is but amorous
dejection

Which experienced correction of our loving will sur-
prise.

For I reckon that if our sighs

In the foretime of our Fancy brought the summer
to her breast,

And she kissed our first request,

She will be forever's best,

Though we move a hundred hearts to trust the heart
that first she blessed.

And of them whose Cupid lies

Dead in memory's garden, I too have a fancy in
demise.

In that garden of this telling stood a wonder-window
dwelling
With a front of pillared marble and a door of oak
and gold.
There were sculptured lions jessant by a stairway
iridescent,
And a fountain sprayed incessant in a circle there
of old.

And along the magic mold
Bloomed those buds which oft at weddings beatific
virgins wear,
Fragrant, fortunate and fair,
In their enterissued hair,
And which oft I wreathed for Daphne when atwain
we wandered there;
With whose tresses to enfold,
Set the fragrance on her forehead for the love the
blossoms told.

Tall beside the trees of twilight, when the daysdone
of July light
Thrilled the sinking world with spectres and our
eyes with western flame,
Turned she slowly and thereat heard myriad fearful
feet that pattered
As unto her ears I flattered deeds of no sufficient
name.

Dame of mythologic frame,
Like a near but vague-lipped phantom by a great
magician wrought,
Pale with love and calm for thought,
She was past the scope of marvel, more than ardor
ever sought.

And in Heaven's month she came,
Tressed like Pluto's queen and featured like a
harbinger of fame.

Then it was the day's perfection seemed no common
road's reflection

But the earthly recollection of a heavenly day be-
fore.

Yet it seemed the heart's Creator, as our halo-haired
spectator,

Turned our steps from life's equator to a dim and
deathlike floor.

There the stars by daylight bore
Unphenomenal effulgence on our kiss-expectant
smiles;

There the amaranthine aisles

Of the future bent their miles,

Filled with omens that repentance to my life still
reconciles,

When the ghosts come slow and sore,
To the after-years of slumber for a troubled glimpse
of yore.

When those glorious walls were standing, and the
signal buds expanding

Where the previous hand of Spring had painted
green the earthly chart,

Life in life a mansion making, yet with inward
horror shaking,

We beheld the gray dust breaking through the tints
of Heaven's art.

Anguish has no rougher dart

Than the jetty-headed missile whose remembrance
still brings pain;

For I seldom can attain

Pure delight or pleasure feign

Forth from her of whom the landscape seemed a
pageant in her train,

When she stood in scenes apart

With omnipotent beauty regent o'er the liegdom
of my heart.

In that beauty she descended from the realms of
light and wended
Through the wonders of a passion in the orchard of
a dream.

Mystic then was life's transition as the glammers of
tradition;
Future lay in recognition; I beheld its banners
gleam.

Ever now the turbid stream
Through the miserable meadow flows to people in
the town;

And the darkened sun looks down

On a field of blasted brown.

Gone that manse that spread its marvels for a
woman's rich renown,

Gone that palace which did seem

Consecration in its purpose; in conception there
supreme.

In that edifice adorning the prophetic front of morn-
ing—

In that architectural marble glowing white upon the
green—

In those towers that eternal years I prayed would
find supernal

- And on them lie soft as vernal dews, ambition placed
its queen.

Superhumanly serene,

But her blue-eyed lustrous pallor, and the wreath
upon her brow—

Gone I know not when or how

Are no benediction now

On the vanishment of glory or the dead leaves on
the bough,

With dead ivy stopt between,

And the black foundations falling from a structural
unseen.

Every window that I cherished in tempestuous
gloom has perished;

Yet I seek that moonlit palace till the searching ends
in fright.

For 'tis wretched, on returning to the substance of
our yearning,

To find shadow fast inurning what was quadrilater-
ally bright.

Then a fervor fools the sight;

For, in thinking of that ground, by actual presence
overgrown,

I am in the wished-for zone,

Where the wisher stands alone

And the deathly scenes enliven as the past becomes
his own.

And that past is flushed with light

As my eyelids droop and darken to all save the
dreams of night.

But in mornlight after dreaming, comes a written
thing redeeming

Vestiges of retribution from the penance of my
days—

Is a flash of oldtime smitten by a hand with pallors
litten,

Sending prose epistles written in my past and
present praise.

And upon the inky phrase,

White and fragrant yet though folded are those
buds I once thought fair—

Those that usual virgins wear

Twisted in their bridal hair.

And a sign within the letter tells a kiss was given
there.

I remember those love-bays
Tree-plucked near a path once precious but now
dingy in its ways,—
Near a door of oak and gold,
Where two sculptured lions jessant watched a stair-
way iridescent,
And a fount I thought incessant, in a circle sprayed
of old.

A Death

The sleeper sobbed and moved again;
His visage brown, and death-bed gown, lay wealthy
in the wealth of men.
His veins were sick as pauper's when the pauper
pulls his rags again
And feels the agony again
Of flesh becoming clay again.
A burnished bed with old-world lace remained him
now of worldly grace.
Reptilian shadows crossed his face. I thought he
would not wake again.

I touched his heart. It sprang again—
Winced after years, of gold, of tears, of curses from
the hate of men.
Twice did he look like death; but when I touched
his eyes, they stared again,
Insanely shrewd that I again
Had thought he might not wake again.
From sleep the eyelids oft awoke; in dying squalls
the drab mouth spoke.
While Death withheld the final stroke, I touched
the lips, that moaned again:

“Lord God, give me to live again.
'Tis true that I have mouthed the lie, have torn the
soul from things and men.
But I will sweeten them, Lord, when Thou givest
me to live again—
To breathe of noisy life again,
To pet the cheek of youth again.
With bleeding soles in stricken gait, let me retrace
those days of hate;
From honor I will ne'er abate. But who can enter
youth again?

“Not yet sift me with dust again!
Another while on this fair isle, fain would I speak
with actual men.
Send me thy symbol saying when Thou sayest, ‘Let
him live again;’
In darling childishness again,
In youth's immaculate strength again—
And I will flay my soul of greed; the hungry from
my hunger feed;
Oh, very little should I need, O Lord, if I may live
again.

“And no sin-gleaming gold again.
To love and give I then would live, and publish laws
of love to men,
And give nor be dejected when they came not with
their thanks again.
I would believe and give again,
Rejected be and love again;
And through my wisdom would I press the sins and
lusts that gave me stress,
Partaking now of deeds that bless—O blessed deed
to live again!

“Lord, let me preach my wish again:
These lands unsold and shores of gold, in freedom
will I give to men;
Yea, wealth and love will I give when I find them
touched with life again.
Kinder than all my kind again,
Would I live, living once again.
Rich would it be to wander poor, or nigh the beautiful stand pure,
And love the darkling and obscure; and thus I
would in life again.

“Where is the way to youth again?
What access hidden, charm forbidden, gives the
light of living men?
What cave turns through the years and when it
opens is the world again?
O visible gates to see again!
O to unlock those gates again!
Shining like hope when hope is near, that I may in
and disappear,
And, lost within the pleasure, hear the prelude of
my life again.

“So fond am I to be again
The hand-enclasped, the joy-address, the laughter-
sharing guest of men,
And glow with games that loudened when the
simplest fancy sang again,
That must I pass (to live again)
Through Hades, where, in pomp again,
The keepers of the secret lurk, near Titans bent in
monstrous work,
And lightnings through the thunders jerk—all
would I dare to live again.

“Those years so good to feel again,
Those paths to go, those woods to know, where
amorous women walk with men,
Their sweets I would not envy when they passed
nor looked on me again.

For, but to see the trees again,
Through tortures I would work again;
Though every hour that I must pass be reptile
turned and scaled with brass
Their fangs would feel as pleasant grass, o’er which
I tread to youth again.

“Thus play despair and hope again;
Despair, despair, the humble tear of eyes beholding
happier men,
Well worth our envy—envy when? Say will they
hope to live again?—
To try the mood of Heaven again?
O let me live to pray again!
O faithless bed, O rotting boat, upon what waters
do we float,
While I on backward visions dote? Ah! Who has
lived and lived again?”



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